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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 ANKARA 007191

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR 10-16 DEC COUNTERPART VISIT OF  
COMMANDER TURKISH LAND FORCES, GEN YASAR BUYUKANIT TO CHIEF  
OF STAFF OF THE U.S. ARMY.

REF: A. A. ANKARA 242

[1](#)B. B. ANKARA 356

Classified By: DCM NANCY MCELDFOWNEY; REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (S) Summary: This Counterpart Visit (CPV) by the  
Commander of the Turkish Land Forces, GEN Yasar Buyukanit,  
will be the most significant event in US-Turkish Army to Army  
relations in over half a decade. The already slowing  
post-Cold War US-Turkish mil to mil relationship was derailed  
in 2003 with the Turkish Parliament's March 1st, "No vote"  
during OIF and the "Suleymaniye" or "July 4th incident" in  
Northern Iraq. Military relations further chilled when, due  
to Turkish perceptions that the US was going to withhold full  
honors from the TLFC Commander during his planned CPV to  
Washington in May 2003, the TLFC pulled out of the visit.  
October 2004 saw the first sign of a thaw in the relationship  
when, at the Conference of European Armies (CEA) GEN  
Buyukanit stated in his bilat with the CSA that he wanted to  
restore mil to mil relations to their traditionally strong  
state. At the same bilat he accepted the CSA's invitation to  
conduct this current CPV, and also invited the USAREUR  
Commander to conduct a March 05 visit to Turkey. While 2005  
has seen some additional efforts towards increasing mil to  
mil relations, (SOCEUR intent to conduct a Special Forces  
JCET in 06, Joint Staff hosting Turkish Special Forces  
leadership in a DVOT in SEP 05, CG USAREUR's letter to GEN  
Buyukanit expressing intent to begin staff to staff  
exploration for engagement opportunities, conduct of HLDG in  
Ankara Nov 05), it is likely that this CPV will be the green  
light the TLFC needs to accelerate engagement. Additionally,  
as GEN Buyukanit is currently in line to become Turkey's  
Chief of Defense in August 2006, his visit to the U.S. has  
enduring importance. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (S) Army to Army engagement has diminished significantly  
since the end of the Cold War and has been virtually  
non-existent since OIF. While the desire to restore mil to  
mil relations and explore engagement opportunities was  
expressed by GEN Buyukanit at the 2004 CEA as well as to GEN  
Bell during his visit to Turkey in March 2005, the pace has  
been, as expected, slow. While the CPV will unquestionably  
lay a foundation upon which more robust engagement can be  
built, actual execution will likely continue to be  
incremental as it is measured against resource restrictions

within the TLFC and negative public reaction to continued terrorist operations in southeastern Turkey by the PKK/KONGRA-GEL, directed and supported from its safe havens in northern Iraq. Correspondingly, lingering anti-US sentiment within the Turkish Armed Forces over OIF in general and the July 4th 2003 Suleymaniye incident in particular, will have some residual impact.

13. (S) With regard to resources, the 28th Mechanized (Peace Keeping) Brigade is the TLFC's showcase unit for conducting international operations and would likely be the first choice for any joint exercises. However, its heavy commitments in EUFOR, KFOR and ISAF (a company/team each) will likely only increase in the future. Command Post Exercise potential is still extremely viable with the recently completed state of the art Simulation Center now fully operational on the War College campus in Istanbul. The Turkish TRADOC Commander also expressed great interest in a proposed Counterpart visit to Ft. Monroe last year, but regretted when it became evident that the trip would be a self-invite rather than a CPV.

14. (SBU) The TLFC has been seeking either Army Staff talks or that an Army Sub Working Group (ASWG) be established as a subset to either the Joint Staff Talks or the High Level Defense Group. The latest request for an ASWG was made at the November HLDG in Ankara. Establishing an Army to Army dialogue, whether one of the Turks' proposals or something else, would provide a venue where TLFC's objectives with regard to interfacing with the US Army could be examined. As Turkey buys less US military hardware (the Army is to receive German tanks soon; no American company bid on the current Attack Helicopter tender), such a venue would allow us to explore new ways to ensure interoperability. It would also provide opportunities to encourage Turkey to expand the

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number of its units trained and equipped for international peacekeeping operation.

15. (S) While it is difficult to accurately gauge the depth of General Buyukanit's feelings towards restoring the U.S.-Turkey mil to mil relationship, his enthusiasm to host GEN Bell in March 05 as well as his commitment to conduct this CPV likely serve as a reasonable barometer. The last-minute cancellation of his visit to USAREUR as GEN Bell's guest in September, as well as his replacement with his CoS, General Saygun, at the 2005 CEA probably do not reflect a change of heart with regard to the relationship, but rather the result of an externally imposed reprioritization of his calendar. (His staff assured us that his sending of General Saygun was intended to demonstrate the value he gave that visit.) Buyukanit, while charismatic, popular within the Army and adept at working the press, is also successful at playing his political cards close to his vest. Members of his staff assert to us that he strongly favors returning to a robust military relationship with the U.S. He will also grip and grin with the best of them in meeting you. General Buyukanit's succession next summer as the CHOD has been the subject of much press speculation of late. Editorials have appeared which suggest that the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) is seeking to retire General Buyukanit early due to his strong Kemalist views and anticipated opposition to the pro-Islam undertones of the current government. The government subsequently denied it intends to tinker with the planned TGS succession. And while anonymous accusations of minor corruption on Buyukanit's part have appeared on a government web site, these do not appear to be significant or credible enough to impact his progression.

#### TURKISH LAND FORCES

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16. (C) The over 400,000 man Turkish Land Forces has since the late 1990s, when the current CHOD, General Ozkok, was its commander, been struggling to modernize both its equipment

and organization. While the term modernization, has traditionally meant to the TLF equipment acquisition, since 2003 it has also encompassed some organizational and Command and Control transformation. However, due to a combination of economic constraints and internal resistance progress has been halting at best. The primary operational focus for the TLFC is currently its fight against the PKK/Kongra-Gel. While the TLFC concedes that they live in a rough neighborhood, they do not perceive any serious external threat at the moment, save the PKK/Kongra-Gel presence in Iraq. Their desire for US support in eradicating the PKK's safe havens in Northern Iraq and the right to conduct cross-border or hot pursuit operations is well known, as is the US position that was expressed during both the Sept. 05 visit by General Jones and LTG Smith and during the November HLDG--i.e., such an action could prove destabilizing in Iraq. However, the subject is likely to be brought up during this visit and is already planned to be the main focus of General Buyukanit's presentation at the American Enterprise Institute dinner on Dec. 14th.

17. (C) The major transformation effort in the TLFC seems to take the shape of equipment acquisition, though also includes a weakly executed strength reduction initiative by the CHOD, General Ozkok. In May 2004, he directed a 10% reduction of the Land Forces, to be realized by the abolishment of four brigades and the Aegean Army HQs in Izmir. While in the past there was some discussion of transforming the TAF into an all volunteer force, this is not likely to happen anytime soon, due to costs and the view within the TGS that conscription serves as a valuable socialization process. The Minister of National Defense stated, in the foreseeable future there are no plans for an all volunteer army. However, as a cost saving measure the TGS did already reduce the personnel strength of the armed forces by 17% by shortening the compulsory military service from 18 months to 15 months, thus also reducing the conscript personnel across the Turkish Armed Forces from 685,000 to 569,000.

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#### BEHIND THE SCENES SUPPORT FOR IRAQ

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18. (SBU) Despite the unpopularity of the Iraq war, Turkey has provided significant logistical support to both Operation Iraqi Freedom and to OEF in Afghanistan. Turkey has approved multiple requests for the use of Incirlik Air Base, including: a tanker refueling operation which has delivered 28,132 gallons since operations began in 2003 and flown 2,578 sorties; the transit of 8,500 US troops on rotation from Iraq from January through April 2004; and the establishment in May 2005 of a logistics hub which allows 6 US military C-17 aircraft to move the amount of cargo it took 9-10 military aircraft to move from Germany. This hub has facilitated the movement of 48,957 tons of supplies since its inception; flown 1554 C-17 sorties; received 689 wide-body cargo aircraft; and houses 150 TDY support personnel. Turkey also approved the use of hub flights for the emergency evacuation of US soldiers from Iraq.

19. (SBU) The Habur Gate crossing from Turkey into Iraq has facilitated 25% of fuel shipments to Coalition forces in Iraq -- approximately 340,000 gallons of fuel every day, two-thirds of gasoline and diesel fuel shipments for the Iraqi people and three million gallons a day in humanitarian fuel shipments. Significant shipments of food and water for coalition forces also pass over the border.

110. (SBU) The Turkish government has also demonstrated its support through its public announcements of support for the January elections; provision of training in Turkey for Iraqi diplomats, political parties and (as part of the NATO training mission) for the Iraqi security forces; hosting a training week-end for Iraqi constitution drafters; and

hosting a meeting of rival Tall Afar tribal leaders in August for a reconciliation dialogue; and bringing together various Sunni groups in Istanbul Dec. 4th to encourage participation in the political process (Ambassador Khalilzad participated in this effort).

#### PARTNER IN GWOT

¶11. (S) Beyond its support for Iraq, Turkey has provided valuable assistance and cooperation to GWOT. On Aug. 8, Turkey completed its second International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) command (II and VII) in Afghanistan, which it held for six months and during which time it contributed over 1,600 troops. Additionally, it has maintained a company/team force as part of every ISAF rotation). Turkey and France have agreed on a shared command of the ISAF Central Command in Kabul during the second half of 2006. Turkey also contributes to reconstruction and training efforts in Afghanistan. It is involved in the reconstruction of schools and is exploring counter-narcotics training programs for Afghan police and alternative livelihood options for poppy farmers. Following PM Erdogan's May visit to Afghanistan, he pledged an additional \$50M in assistance to the country.

¶12. (U) Together with the US, Turkey coordinates military assistance to Georgia and Azerbaijan, improving their abilities to protect key energy transport routes. Turkey subscribes to every nonproliferation arrangement it is eligible to join, including the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). It will host the first PSI combined air, land and sea exercise in May 2006.

#### IRAN AND SYRIA - DIFFERENT MEANS TO THE SAME END

¶13. (S) Turkey's watchword for both Syria and Iran is "engagement." While the government states that it shares our goal of a nuclear weapons-free Iran, it doesn't want to jeopardize its nascent trade development opportunities, including energy, or its renewed intelligence exchange with Iran on the PKK. According to TGS, Turkey and Iran began sharing intelligence this summer on the PKK, holding regular

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meetings at the border. As of September, Iran had turned over 40 suspected PKK members or sympathizers. Turkey touts its support for the EU-3 dialogue and Turkish officials stress to us the need to maintain dialogue and to identify a diplomatic solution. The equivocal response by PM Erdogan and the MFA to President Ahmadinejad's Oct. 25 statement about Israel, combined with Ankara's all-out reception of Iranian FM Mottaki earlier this month, demonstrate that Turkey is trying to walk both sides of the line on Iran. Turkey's tact toward Syria is the same. Turkish military officials have characterized Syria as a scared cat that could lash out if "backed into a corner." They and others in the government stress the need to support Assad, who they claim is a reformer at heart, against those Ba'athist dinosaurs in the regime who seek to undermine him and regularly urge US engagement.

#### DEFENSE INDUSTRY COOPERATION WEAK

¶14. (SBU) Historically the strongest area of our bilateral relationship, the bilateral security cooperation relationship is declining significantly. Under Turkey's current policy, being implemented by the Undersecretariat for Defense Industries (SSM), the emphasis is on Direct Commercial Sales at the expense of Foreign Military Sales and American companies are having difficulty competing. The last significant commercial tender won by a U.S. firm was the 2002 win by Boeing for an Air Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) system. (Note: Boeing recently delivered a letter

threatening to take legal action against SSM over protracted contract disputes and just signed the Critical Design Review this month. End Note.) In early 2004, SSM cancelled three tenders (UAVs, Main Battle Tanks and ATAK Helicopter). Last month MOD finalized an agreement with Germany to acquire 294 Leopard II A4 Main Battle tanks. A second UAV tender was won by the Israelis weeks before PM Erdogan's spring 2005 visit to Israel.

¶15. (SBU) The revised attack helicopter tender (Note: The first tender was issued in 1995 and won by Bell Textron. SSM cancelled it over technology transfer issues. End Note.) issued in February 2005 was the first to contain new "standard" terms and condition. The three US firms that took the tender (Bell, Boeing, Sikorsky) found the new T&Cs so onerous that Bell immediately dropped out of contention and Sikorsky soon after. Boeing invested considerable time and energy to try and work through its concerns with SSM but, even after several contract revisions and two postponements of the bid due date, was unable to justify participation. On Oct. 13, Boeing notified SSM that it would not submit a bid.

¶16. (SBU) SSM's stated goal is to develop an indigenous capability to supply sophisticated components for integration into foreign products, beginning with the attack helicopter, and has outlined an aggressive timetable to do so. To meet that schedule, SSM requires companies to sign up unconditionally to all T&Cs and to confirm at the time of bid submission the supplier's government's willingness to allow transfer of the required technology. DUSD Suzanne Patrick and State DAS Greg Suchan explained to SSM in clear terms the USG limitations that prohibit such upfront guarantees but SSM has refused to revise the tender to remove that requirement. Sikorsky, which is considering participating in a tender for 52 utility helicopters and, if it wins, establishing in Turkey a global production site for export models of its Black Hawk helicopter, will not bid if this condition is not removed. ODC Chief MG Sutton has held extensive talks with Service Chiefs, DCHOD Kosaner and J-5 head LTG Zorlu about the negative impact of the SSM program on US participation in the Turkish defense market. Across the board, they pledged their preference for US equipment but professed an inability -- or unwillingness -- to influence the process.

WILSON